Textbook Production: The entangled practices of developing educational media for schools

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1 Introduction and rationale

Textbooks, according to Ludwig Fleck (1935/80) and Thomas Kuhn (1962/96) will inevitably produce stable versions of dominant knowledge. Perhaps this is why the US State Department employs people to monitor other countries’ textbooks, “in an effort to understand better how their people think and what their governments want them to think” (The Economist 2012). As a teenager, Bill Bryson suspected there was “a mystifying universal conspiracy among textbook authors to make certain the material they dealt with never strayed too near the realm of the mildly interesting” (Bryson 2003, 22). At the same time, school textbooks have been the site of intense controversies. In 2012, Rethinking Columbus, a book which re-evaluates the role of Columbus in 1492 and foregrounds issues of indigenous rights, was effectively banned from school use in Arizona (Bigelow 2012). In Japan, explosive conflicts erupted over attempts to revise the country’s role in the Asia-Pacific war (Saaler 2005). After intense public pressure, a Swiss publisher revised passages in a high school textbook which gave creationism and evolution a similar epistemic status (Künzli et al. 2013, 251).

Across a range of disciplines, scholars have carefully identified that textbook writers selectively construct versions of the world with political effects. The field of textbook studies has often asked “Who defines relevant knowledge?” (Lässig 2010; Marmer forthcoming; Wiater 2005). Although answers to this question have been suggested, scholars have rarely ventured into the publishing houses to observe how knowledge is selected and made relevant in daily practice. The process of developing textbooks and other curricular materials remains something of a black box, a “woefully neglected field of educational research” (Röhl 2013, 206). How do pedagogical concerns and particular kinds of content knowledge find their way into textbooks? Which actors are involved? How are decisions on content taken? Which student-subjects are being addressed? Why, when contemporary curricular guidelines increasingly focus on competences and provide few details on specific topics to be covered, do school textbooks from competing publishing houses still provide such similar content? And what does this tell us about processes of canonization and change (or: the stickiness of, and disruptions in, discursive flows) in a given place at a given time?

In this habilitation, my goal is to provide empirically grounded responses to these questions by drawing on ethnographic fieldwork to trace the development and production of textbooks for secondary level schools in Germany. The specific aim of
this introduction is to provide an overview of the core findings and central arguments presented in the six publications which contribute to the written habilitation. It will also link the publications by teasing out key features of educational publishing practices. These features, emerging through the methodological approach undertaken in this study, suggest that ‘who defines relevant knowledge’ is a misleading question. Instead, I propose an entangled model for understanding textbook production, with possible repercussions for future textbook work.

To this end, Section 2 engages with four fields of research relevant to exploring the world of educational media publishing, identifying current challenges in each field. Section 3 introduces the study, outlining ‘ethnographic discourse analysis’ as an approach which can address these challenges. Section 4 provides a brief overview of the educational publishing industry, highlighting contemporary market leaders and trends. Section 5 introduces each of the six Papers which form the basis of the full habilitation. Where Paper 1 presents a broad overview of publishing practices, Papers 2 to 5 focus more closely on ethnographic data, and Paper 6 reflects on the increasingly prominent issue of digital textbooks.

Section 6 draws the findings of the Papers together, discussing how they contribute to our understanding of textbook production and the possibilities for change in this field. Here, I identify eight ‘bundles’ of practices which play substantial roles in the production process: market orientation, knowledge delegation, procedural authorization, pedagogical goals, scholarly accuracy, ethical appropriateness, imagined users and echoes of the circulating discourse. While some of these issues have been discussed in previous research, others emerged through the ethnographic discourse analytical approach used here. At the same time, this approach, which observes daily practices in the field, enabled one particularly salient insight to become apparent: the contingent entanglement of the publishing process. In Section 6, I thus also propose a visualization of this entanglement and discuss its implications for attempts to alter the kinds of knowledge considered legitimate for schooling. Section 7 concludes by summarizing the findings on the substantive, conceptual and phronetic levels, and identifying future follow-up projects.

The six papers:


Full text available online: http://pedocs.de/frontdoor.php?source_opus=8312&la=de.

2 Previous research

Given the research questions outlined above, four fields are directly relevant to this study: Textbook studies, curriculum research, media ethnography and discourse studies. By drawing on these four traditions, I pick up the long voiced call for a “multidimensional” approach to textbooks which considers them in their pedagogical, medial and political dimensions (e.g. Stein 1977).
2.1 Textbook studies

The interdisciplinary field of textbook studies has, to date, primarily been oriented towards the contents of textbooks, analysing which discourses and epistemologies are hegemonic; whether the content on offer is accurate, age-appropriate and pedagogically useful; and whose account of history, scientific knowledge, global social relations, etc. is structuring societal norms and values (Macgilchrist and Otto 2014). In a cultural studies approach to textbooks, they are seen as a “seismograph” of current discursive configurations (Baier, Christophe, and Zehr 2014). Important as this type of analysis is, a significant lacuna is apparent in the current research literature. We still know very little about how particular content – whose history, which social relations, etc. – makes its way into textbooks.¹

Although the research on textbook production is fragmentary, and the available studies rarely refer to one another, a few studies have described the multiple agencies which collide during the development of textbooks. Accounts of the production process can be roughly divided into three groups: (i) Historical investigations trace the knowledge-producing and knowledge-disseminating practices of textbook publishing across time (e.g., Jäger 2003; Kreusch 2012; Marr 2006; McEneaney and Nieswandt 2006; Müller forthcoming; Roldan Vera 2003). (ii) Critical approaches emphasize the role of market factors and interest groups pushing specific political agendas, suggesting that publishing is an inherently conservative industry. Only pressure from beyond the publishers, such as new legislation, curricular guidelines or activism, can effect substantial change (e.g. Apple 1986, 1996, 2006; Manza, Sauder, and Wright 2010; Ninnes 2001; Nishino 2008; Perlmutter 1997). (iii) In contrast, accounts written by individuals involved in publishing as authors, editors or publishers emphasize the practical and conceptual work that goes into making textbooks, and tend to play down the influence of economic factors in the selection of content (e.g. Binnenkade 2008; Feldmann 2010; Flynn 1990; Gautschi 2006; Meyer 2009; Norton 2005; Pogelschek 2007; also Wobring 2014; but see Pinto 2007 and Silverman 1991).

¹ The vast majority of textbook studies are also not concerned with if and how textbooks and curricular materials are actually used. Several ongoing projects are now exploring the practices of using these materials (e.g. Binnenkade forthcoming; Macgilchrist, Christophe, and Binnenkade 2015; Mueller-Bittner 2008; Rezat 2011; Röhl 2013).
Several of these studies propose their own ordering of the field of publishing. David Perlmutter (1997), for instance, identifies industrial, commercial and social domains of control that influence textbook visual content. For Jeff Manza and colleagues, market forces constitute the core factor influencing textbook content selection (Manza, Sauder, and Wright 2010). Eugenia Roldán Vera (2000) tells an intriguing story of textbooks with no identifiable single author, tracing “how this lack of singularity in writing affected the ‘messages’ that the books conveyed” (2000: 338). Heike Hessenauer (2006) identifies several factors influencing textbook production (see Fig. 1). Noteworthy is that Hessenauer precedes this model with the comment that, despite the clarity of the diagram, “concentrating on any one aspect in isolation should actually be forbidden, since all the elements are multiply entangled and mutually interdependent” (Hessenauer 2006, 268). Similarly, Perlmutter notes that the sectioning of control into the three areas he identifies “is artificial” and that “each interpenetrates the other” (Perlmutter 1997, 72). I will return to this entanglement in Section 6.

Fig. 1. Factors influencing textbook production (Hessenauer 2006: 2006)

Collating these diverse accounts, three observations can be made. First, there is a general understanding among textbook studies in general, and among accounts of the production process in particular, of the textbook as an “indicator of social consensus”, of one place where “a (national) society, embodied by diverse actors and social groups, constructs instructional knowledge with corresponding subject effects, and whose
structural elements include dominance, selectivity and normativity” (Höhne 2003, 45, emphasis added). Traces of debates and conflicts among these actors and social groups will be discernible in the textbooks, but the emphasis to date has lain on canonical “textbook knowledge” (Höhne 2003; Stein 1977) or “official knowledge” (Apple 2000). Although there is certainly merit in this perspective which foregrounds the canonical dimension of textbook knowledge, recent insights into the “messiness” of social life (Law 2004; Marcus 1998) suggest that the production process is unlikely to be as smooth and harmonious as contemporary accounts suggest (e.g. Pogelschek 2007; Wiater 2005). One challenge I saw at the outset of this study was thus not only to open the black box of production processes, but to also analyze if and when the social consensus is disrupted, i.e. those moments of undecideability when it becomes clear that various options are possible and there is no inherent reason to take any one particular decision (Rancière 2011). What happens in these complicated and messy situations in which textbook producers find themselves when the surface harmony is interrupted? How are decisions made? Looking closely at these everyday, apparently mundane, moments can provide insights into the ‘big questions’ faced by a given contemporary society and mediated through schooling.

Second, the studies note, albeit apologetically, the overlap and entanglement of the human and materialdiscursive elements they identify. There is a sense, across the writing, of valiant individual human actors, trying to achieve their pedagogical and content-specific goals but thwarted by material ‘constraints’ (including bodily, material, multimodal, pedagogical, temporal, legal and economic constraints): The layout, the pressure to make a profit, the deadlines, etc. all impact on the authors’ possibilities of shaping the textbook as they would like it to be. Textbook research, in parallel with other media research, has thus tended to foreground human agency, and see other ‘things’ are a limiting context or constraint on authorial voice (e.g. Dornfeld 2002; Houtman 2004). An alternative perspective is offered by theoretical considerations in what has been called ‘new materialism’. The latter emphasizes the agency of nonhuman

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2 I use the word ‘materialdiscursive’ here to highlight that there is no ‘discourse’ (or meaning-making practices constituting identities and agencies within relations of power) without ‘materiality’ (physical things, bodies, technologies) and no ‘materiality’ without ‘discourse’. Although the materialist understanding of ‘discourse’ which Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have proposed already includes materiality in/alongside discourse, the more widespread use of the word discourse (in critical discourse analysis, sociology of science, discursive psychology, etc.) often refer only to verbal or semiotic meaning-making. For this reason, to foreground an onto-epistemology in which material and discourse are invariably entwined, I use ‘materialdiscursive’ (cf. Barad, 2007).
actants (Latour 2005), the entanglement of materialdiscursive agencies (Alaimo 2010; Barad 2007; Haraway 1997) and the vibrant matter which makes up our world (Bennett 2010). Materialdiscursive elements, in this view, are thus not only contextual constraints but co-authors (Knorr Cetina 1981). The challenge emerging for me from this second observation – of the important role assigned to other-than-human elements in the production process – is to grapple with the notion of responsibility which accompanies descriptions of materialdiscursive elements involved in the production process. Is the difference between seeing these as (structural) ‘constraints’ on human action and seeing them as (sticky) ‘co-authors’ a difference which makes a difference?

A third observation of previous research on educational publishing is that, although the historical analyses draw on rich sources, and many analyses are theoretically sophisticated, *the accounts of today’s publishing practices are empirically ‘thin’*. On the one hand, the studies which attend to big issues in the contemporary world pay little empirical attention to the ‘messiness’, the contradictions, misunderstandings and ambivalences, or “the play of multiple, shifting, and competing statements with practice effects” (Abu-Lughod 1991, 472). On the other hand, in studies which attend to situated practices, there is little discussion of broader issues, of “the genesis, reproduction, and change of form and meaning of a given social/cultural whole” (Ortner 1984, 149). The challenge which arises here is to combine these two approaches, in order to provide an empirically thick account of small situated practices which speaks to big socio-cultural-political issues relevant to education. This study picks up on Michael Apple’s still unheeded call to provide “a long-term and theoretically and politically grounded ethnographic investigation that follows a curriculum artifact such as a textbook from its writing to its selling” (Apple 1986, 104). Adopting this “empirical agenda” would not only “be a major contribution to our understanding of the relationship among culture, politics and economy” and how this relationship becomes relevant for schooling, “it is also absolutely essential if we are to act in ways that alter the kinds of knowledge considered legitimate for transmission in our schools” (ibid.).

2.2 Curriculum research

Within curriculum research, textbooks have often been assigned a programmatic role in schooling (e.g. Apple 2000; Baumert, Bos, and Watermann 2008; Gautschi 2006; Künzli et al. 2013; Tröhler and Oelkers 2005). They are, in an important sense, “what
older generations choose to tell younger generations” (Pinar 2004: 185). The question, “What shall we tell the children?” offers a frame for research on school history textbooks (Foster and Crawford 2006). Indeed, this is often a controversial question, as school curriculum in general, and textbooks in particular, can be seen as “the site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and their world” (Pinar et al. 2004: 847f.; cf. Dillon 2009; Parkes 2011).³

Using a conceptual vocabulary I will draw on in this study in order to foreground textbooks’ programmatic function, Ian Westbury (2000) refers to three dimensions of curriculum: policy, programmatic and enacted curricula.⁴ Policy curricula refer to those curricular guidelines written in the policy dimension which are designed on a relatively abstract level and oriented to achieving standardization and aiding educational governance. Policy curricula include reflexive descriptions of the aims and goals of educational practice, and they delineate, to a greater or lesser extent, certain key elements which should be dealt with across diverse schools (e.g. contemporary policy curricula for History include key issues, dates and names, and key competences). Enacted curriculum refers to what is actually done in classroom practice; how teachers and students engage with materials, contents, competences, etc. and how they enact that which counts as worth knowing. In “between” (Matthes and Heinze 2005) these two dimensions, the programmatic curriculum fills the policy curriculum with more detail. This can be in the form of textbooks which provide orientation for the content to be dealt with over the school year, and the sequence in which it should be taught.

The key insight emerging from research at the intersection of the policy, programmatic and enacted curricula is that classroom practice is rarely a straightforward implementation of policy curriculum (e.g. Bowe, Ball, and Gold 1992; Chávez-López 2003; Oelkers 2006; Williamson 2013). Some studies attempt to explain the divergence

³ On the complex similarities and differences between curriculum theory and Didaktik, see Künzli et al. 2013, 241; Westbury 2000.
⁴ Alternative ways of splitting the curriculum abound: Jürgen Baumert and colleagues (2008: 24) divide the process into four levels (intended, potential, implemented, achieved), with textbooks as the potential curriculum (see Fig. 2 below). Stefan Hopmann and Rudolf Künzli (1998, 20) refer to three levels (political, programmatic, practical), with state curricula (Lehrpläne) and textbooks taken together as programmatic. Gaell Hildebrand (2007: 46) teases out five perspectives: the intended, enacted, realised, null and hidden curriculum. For Witlof Vollstädt and colleagues (1999) the textbook has a “quasicurricular” function. I find Westbury’s three dimensional model most helpful since it, firstly, avoids psychologizing concepts such as ‘intended’ and ‘achieved’; secondly, points to the practical and political aspects of all dimensions; and thirdly, enables a separating out of curricular guidelines (policy dimension), which have relatively little content, from textbooks (programmatic dimension), which are filled with specific texts, images and tasks (see also Doyle 1992).
between policy and enacted curriculum as due to contextual factors such as national policy and funding arrangements; organizational factors such as management styles and internal or external assessments; micro-political factors such as professional hierarchies and expectations of parents or students; or individual factors such as teachers’ professional background and personal disposition (see Edwards 2009, 2). The assumption driving these explanations is that policy input or prescription could be more effective, and thus learning improved, if these factors were better dealt with.

Other studies contest this basic assumption, and instead argue that difference, multiplicity and non-linearity in the relationship between policy curriculum and student learning is “to be expected and described rather than be identified as problematic and explained (away)” (Edwards 2009, 16; cf. Edwards, Miller, and Priestley 2009; Edwards, Priestley, and Miller 2008; Meseth, Proske, and Radke 2012; McLaughlin 1976; Parkes 2011). This latter group of studies questions the suitability of linear diagrams of implementation or diffusion (such as Fig. 2) for engaging with curriculum. Even when teachers regularly consult the policy curricula, classroom practice will inevitably exceed the prescriptions which reach it in the form of policy documents (Künzli and Santini-Amgarten 1999: 155). Enacting the curriculum is a matter of translation, change and adaptation. Standardization in the form of policy curriculum is unstable and provisional. Participatory (some may say utopian) visions of the curricula of the future imagine them as “more ‘open source’ process rather than a fixed product, as embodied in the ‘wiki’ format of open authorship, collective editing, and collaborative production”, with “teachers and learners as peer-to-peer producers, participative authors, and active creators of curriculum content, processes, and outcomes in a distributed meshwork of joined-up learning” (Williamson 2013, 8; cf. Mfum-Mensah 2009).
Fig. 2. *Linear model of curriculum implementation (Baumert, Bos, and Watermann 2008, 24)*

What these studies elide is the programmatic curriculum. There is a tendency to either skip over the practical work of filling the policy curricula with content, or to erase differences between the policy and programmatic curricula. Yet textbooks fill today’s increasingly brief curricular guidelines with specific texts, images and tasks. A UNESCO study suggests that in the global South, there is very little alignment between policy curriculum and textbooks (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2012). For Jürgen Oelkers, it is “audacious” to assume a causal relationship between policy curriculum and textbooks, but he does wonder how new policy curricula will change textbook production (Oelkers 2010, 34). So, what does the programmatic curriculum (in the form of textbooks) ‘do with’ the policy curriculum in Germany? Is there a linear mode in which textbooks simply implement policy? Or is the relationship here also non-linear, complex and multiple? If the latter, which actors and other material-discursive agencies are involved in translating, changing and adapting policy into programmatic textbooks?

2.3 *Media ethnography*

This is where recent insights from media research have informed my investigation into textbooks and their production. Textbooks operate not only as curricular objects; they
are also media (Stein 1978). Few discussions of textbooks consider them in their mediality, where media are understood as “socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice, a ritualized collocation of different people on the same mental map, sharing or engaged with popular ontologies of representation” (Gitelman 2006, 7). Central to this definition of media, and important for this practice-oriented study, is that it involves not only material “technological form” (for printed textbooks: the paper, hard cover, weight, colour, linear chapter logic; for digital textbooks: the tablet and touchscreen, laptop and keyboard, the source code, bits and bytes), but also “their associated protocols”, the ways in which people engage with these technological forms from their situated embeddedness in particular socio-cultural-historic configurations. These “protocols” include, in my understanding in this study, not only the ways of engaging with the technological form as user but also as producer.

What do the producers do? Ethnographic studies in the field of media production have explored, among other things, decision-making practices, professional routines, newsroom organization, corporate hierarchy, media policies, market forces, and the negotiation of journalistic authorship and authority (e.g. Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980; Paterson and Domingo 2008; Tuchman 1978; Van Hout and Macgilchrist 2010). A number of observers have critiqued ethnographic work within media studies for not linking their observations to broader issues of “the social, cultural, and political dynamics of particular communities” (Abu-Lughod 1997) and/or for having a relatively thin understanding of ethnography, often conducting only short visits and interviews (Abu-Lughod 1997; Ang 1995, 182; Dornfeld 2002, 248; but see Knoblauch 2005 on the value of “focused ethnography”).

Particularly influential for my approach have thus been anthropological approaches to media ethnography which “follow the thing” (Marcus 1995, 106) through various milieus, e.g. Lila Abu-Lughod (2005) tracing of television serials from urban directors to rural viewers, Arlene Dávila’s (2002) work on advertising production for what is known as the U.S. Hispanic market, and Ulf Hannerz’ (2004) research with foreign correspondents. Media anthropology “theorize[s] media processes, products, and uses as complex parts of social reality” (Spitulnik 1993, 307), and attends to “how consumers

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5 For an overview of competing definitions of media, see Mock 2006.
and producers are themselves imbricated in discursive universes, political situations, economic circumstances, national settings, historical moments, and transnational flows, to name only a few relevant contexts” (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin 2002, 2). It sees media texts as “one strand in the web of culture” and entails “reaching out from the [media text] itself towards a set of connections between it and notions simmering in the culture at large” (Bird 2005, 227). This orientation, accompanied by thick empirical work, offers an empirically grounded way of investigating complex and not always coherent practices.

Nevertheless, perhaps understandably given the etymology of *ethno*-graphy and *anthro*-pology, these studies focus primarily on the people involved, sometimes at the expense of the specificity of the (multimodal) textwork being done as media texts are produced (Briggs 2005; Peterson 2005). “The point”, as Harrison (2006: 128) argues, “is to analyse both the way these messages are produced (their values and material/economic base) and the way they are articulated (their linguistic and symbolic structure)”. If media texts are always about retelling, remixing and entextualization, i.e., the de-contextualization of text or discourse from one location and its re-contextualizing in another site (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996), then media linguistics argues that we need studies which observe these specific entextualization practices in the field, and also engage closely with the texts which emerge into the public domain (NewsTalk&Text Research Group 2011). Educational media such as textbooks are, in my view, particularly interesting for this question since their entextualizations emerge at the nexus of what seem to be radically contradictory considerations: economic, pedagogical, epistemic, utopian and political.

### 2.4 Discourse analysis in education

An emerging body of work in educational research aims to do just that, albeit not in the field of educational publishing. Several recent studies have combined ethnography’s “way of seeing” (Wolcott 2008) with discourse analytical tools for close analysis of the texts in the specific field (see Ott, Langer, and Rabenstein 2012). These ethnographically oriented studies are located within the broader field of critical educational research which draws on discourse theories. With a range of methods and diverse foci, these studies are interested in the contradictory processes of producing, reproducing and transforming education orderings and practices, and in the construction
of ‘education’ and educationally relevant objects in academic, political and public debates (Fegter et al. 2015). Across the range of studies, there is a broadly shared interest in relations among knowledge, power and subjectivation (for recent overviews, see Rogers 2011; Truschkat and Bormann 2013; Wrana et al. 2014).

One important field of educational inquiry engages with the notion that subjects are constituted, reproduced and transformed through the circulation and citation of discourse, and that individuals act from (provisional, shifting, decentred) subjectivities formed by discourse. The individual becomes an agentic ‘subject’, in this view, through a double move: by recognizing the way he or she is categorized and addressed as a particular acceptable, legible and desirable being in everyday practices, and by acting in ways which exceed the discourse which enables the agency. ‘Subjectivation’ refers to the complex process by which one enters a relationship with oneself as the subject being addressed (Butler 1997a, 1997b; Foucault 1982; Reckwitz 2008b).

Educational studies have explored this issue in a range of setting, from citizenship education (Biesta 2011), biographical interviews (Reh 2003), adult education (Wrana 2006), multicultural school events (Youdell 2006), disciplinary and affective school practices (Langer 2008), physical training (Alkemeyer 2012) and open learning settings (Rabenstein 2010) to labour market policy (Ott 2015), articulations of love (Jergus 2011) and the possibility of a ‘pedagogic subjectivation’ which would instantiate radical equality in schools (Simons and Masschelein 2010).

Analysing educational media production offers a unique empirical space to observe the making of programmatic aspects of ‘forms of subjectivation’, i.e. the ways in which media makers imagine, contest and negotiate the kinds of student-subjects they will address (Miller and Rose 1990). In Sabine Reh and Norbert Ricken’s (2012) terms, this empirical space enables the researcher to look at the “first act” of an addressing practice; it delays analysis of the second act to later (empirical) work. How teachers and students react to and engage with these forms of subjectivation is indeed a separate question. The challenge posed by taking a close look at this first act, i.e. how programmatic aspects are developed, is to interrogate how imagined future readers or users are being addressed during the development process.

A second body of educational inquiry drawing on the notion of discourse focuses more directly on knowledge production and circulation. This research has been particularly prominent in the field of educational governance (e.g. Bormann 2014;
Höhne and Karcher 2015; Mäße 2010). Stephen Ball has explored knowledge-construction work in school organization (Ball 1987), education reform (Ball 1994) and educational policy (Ball 2008). Further studies in this line have, for instance, developed new approaches to educational innovation (Bormann 2013), investigated literacy practices (Gee 2004), educational technology (Hall 2014) and critical digital pedagogy (Chernik 2014), and explored the constructions of competences (Truschkat 2008), gender (Barajas 2008; David 2006), race (Brown 2010), and content issues in textbooks (e.g. Crawford 2004; Höhne, Kunz, and Radtke 2005; Östman 1996; Provenzo, Shaver, and Bello 2011).

Chia-Ling Wang (2011) argues that the strong reliance on Ball’s reading of Foucault in educational research has led an over-emphasis on examining “the constitution of the system of order”. But, suggests Wang, it is also necessary to explore “the contingent moments of its discontinuities” in order to interrogate present ways of being (Wang 2011, 148). And indeed, contemporary social, cultural and educational theory is increasingly concerned with disruptions, assemblages (e.g. Youdell and Armstrong 2011), rhizomes (e.g. Friedrich, Jaastad, and Popkewitz 2010; Masny 2012) and mobilities (Urry 2007). Clemencia Rodriguez (2001), in her research on citizen’s media production, has suggested the evocative metaphor of “fissures” to point to practices which rupture cultural codes and put a chink in the symbolic realm. In the educational field, Kris Sloan (2006) has, for instance, traced how teachers actively read and respond to locally conceived accountability explicit curriculum policies, thereby ‘fissuring’ any potential linear impact a policy may have. Ball and Antonio Olmedo (2013, 85) explore how the “uncertainties, discomforts and refusals” that teachers bring to their everyday school practice interrupt what can seem to be inevitable neoliberal educational reforms. Indeed, ‘interruption’ has been an important concept for educational inquiry into how disruptions to an apparently solid consensus illustrate the spaces of our everyday life in which social, political or cultural change is under way (e.g. Lather 1991; Parkes 2011). Disruptions need not refer to ‘positive’ change (from a particular normative perspective). Empirical observations of change can flag participants’ shifting concerns and highlight transformations to those knowledges which count as worth circulating in educational practice.

Nevertheless, Sara Ahmed (2012) argues convincingly that we need also to attend to stickiness and solidity, where fissures, mobilities and assemblages congeal into
restrictive categories such as, in her analysis, race and ethnicity. It takes work to hold a shifting ensemble down for long; to make it sticky. This work of canonization is, as previous research has shown, being done during textbook production. It also takes work to put a dent in the solidity; to open up new fissures and discontinuities. The challenge is to interrogate how both of these processes play out during textbook production.

2.5 Summary
I have outlined a set of challenges in the four fields relevant to this study. Each field offers a way of engaging with some of the challenges posed by the other fields. Within textbook studies, there is a need to (i) investigate the complicated and messy practices which establish and breach consensus, (ii) elaborate more empirically thick accounts of textbook production, and (iii) engage with the entanglement of human and material-discursive aspects of textbook (production). Understanding the textbook as programmatic curriculum raises the still unanswered challenge of identifying (iv) the actors and other material-discursive agencies involved in turning policy curricula into textbooks, i.e. in struggles over what to tell the younger generation, and (v) how these struggles play out in daily professional practice. Engaging with the textbook as medium, and observing it through the lenses of media ethnography, opens up ways of engaging with the daily work of producing textbooks and of linking local fieldwork to broader social, cultural and political dynamics. The challenge here is to simultaneously (vi) provide a substantial analysis of the actual texts being produced. Finally, discourse-oriented research in educational studies reminds us of the first challenge, noted above, to investigate how consensus is both established and breached, and it adds (vii) the need to interrogate the practices of actively shaping forms of subjectivation.

3 The study
The goal of this research was thus to provide an empirically grounded ‘thick’ account of educational publishing which integrates insights from the four fields discussed above and addresses these challenges. An approach that colleagues and I have developed and called ‘ethnographic discourse analysis’ combines insights from ethnography and discourse analysis in a particular way in order to engage with this kind of hybrid research focus (Macgilchrist, Ott, and Langer 2014; Macgilchrist and Van Hout 2011).
3.1 The field
The data for the analyses which follow are drawn from 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in leading commercial educational publishing houses in Germany from 2009 to 2011. Over this period, in addition to observing the work, and “hanging out” (Kendall 2002) in the publishing offices, I followed the production of several educational media ‘products’ from conceptualization to publication, including textbooks for high school History, Politics/Economics, and Social Studies (which combines History, Politics and Geography into one subject); teachers’ notes; online materials; and worksheets to accompany a graphic novel on the Holocaust. Fieldwork included open interviews, informal chats, “discourse-based interviews” on particular textual extracts (Odell, Goswami, and Herrington 1983), document analysis, participant observation at in-house meetings at several management hierarchies, visits to industry events such as the annual didacta educational trade fair, and participant observation at ‘author meetings’ in which author teams (comprised of authors, editors and occasionally specialist advisors or academics) discussed manuscripts for textbooks and other curricular materials. In addition to extensive field notes, and 36 audio-recorded interviews, the data included approximately 200 hours of audio-recorded author meetings.

3.2 The methodology: Ethnographic discourse analysis
From ethnography, I take a concern with describing and contextualizing meaning-making practices in social life. Ethnography’s overall goal has been described as “mak[ing] direct contact with social agents in the normal courses and routine situations of their lives to try to understand something of how and why these regularities take place” (Willis 2000: xiii, emphasis in original). Ideally, ethnography involves “thick participation” (Sarangi 2007), i.e. sustained involvement in a research site through fieldwork, and “thick description” (Geertz 1973), i.e. the narrating of social activity in as much of its complexity as possible. Thick participation and thick description enable the ethnographer to explore what is significant about situated practices, the specific social acts at particular moments in time and space (Abu-Lughod 1997).

An ethnographic approach to educational publishing seemed most appropriate at the outset of this project, since, as noted above, we still know very little about the practices in the educational publishing industry: Firstly, open-ended interviews and observations
raise our awareness of what is important to participants (editors, managers, authors, designers, etc.). By observing carefully, writing thick descriptions of experiences in the field, and intensively analysing particular cases, “emergent knowledge” of the participants’ own priorities and practices is able to develop (Small 2009). Secondly, by tracing one set of actors over a relatively long period (here 18 months), an ethnographic approach emphasizes practices and can ascertain how diverse elements and events are linked to one another through time. Thirdly, case studies enable researchers to extrapolate from situated practices to make not statistical but logical inferences, i.e. to use a “diagnostic” method akin to medical practice to make general statements based on the particular instance (Geertz, 1973: 26).

More specifically, ethnography’s “dialectic of surprise” (Willis and Trondman 2000: 12) has also informed my approach, i.e. the intricate process of interpreting fieldnotes, interview data and audio recordings against the researcher’s theoretical interests and back again. This I find useful in going beyond the immediately present situation, in order to trace how the “organization of the everyday is permeated with connections that extend beyond it” (Smith 2005: 40), connections between specific everyday practices and broader issues which are not always made explicit in the field. To this end, a set of “rich points”, i.e. those fieldwork moments which departed from my expectations and seemed surprising or intriguing, has prompted my selection of cases on which to focus in extended analyses (Agar 1996).

As a theoretical and methodological perspective on situated practices, ethnography is particularly useful for examining discourse production. Nevertheless, I share John Swales’ (1998) hesitation to use the noun form ‘ethnography’ for my approach to textbook production. Swales refers to his seminal study of situated academic writing practices as a “textography” to “mean something more than a disembodied textual or discoursal analysis, but something less than a full ethnographic account” (Swales, 1998: 1). Likewise, given my fairly specific (thick) attention to discursive formations and shifts, I prefer to use the adjectival form ‘ethnographic’ to embed the studies in the epistemology, attitude and research methods associated with ethnography but to bode caution in the type and scope of the findings provided by the studies. My aim in the extended analyses here is not, for instance, to provide a substantial account of “the grain of the field” (Murphy 2011, 387) in the publishing house.
Discourse analysis comes in here as a way of engaging in close analysis of language and semiotic practices. The interdisciplinary field of discourse studies includes multiple approaches and definitions (see, e.g., Angermuller et al. 2014, Hart and Cap 2014). I understand ‘discourse’ to refer to “any complex of elements in which relations play a constitutive role. This means that elements do not pre-exist the relational complex but are constituted through it” (Laclau 2005: 68, original emphasis; cf. Wrana and Langer 2007). In this understanding, my primary interest is not in identifying mechanisms in the (re-)production of ‘discourses’ (countable/plural) understood as regularities in knowledge systems (e.g. Keller et al. 2006), but in exploring the everyday situated production of ‘discourse’ (uncountable/singular). In this sense, discourse is understood as practice (Martin Rojo 2001) and discourse theory as practice theory (Schatzki 1996: 13). ‘Practice’ in turn is understood as a “nexus of doings and saying” (Schatzki 1996: 89), e.g. cooking practices, voting practices, textbook production practices. This bundle of (linguistic, physical, technical, bodily, semiotic, etc.) elements makes up the smallest unit of social analysis. This, for me, in addition to the materialist theories noted in Section 2.1, provides an important corrective to the traditional focus in ethnography on human agency; practice theory decentres this human practitioner in the publishing house, attending instead to the practice-as-nexus.6

More specifically, my approach to discourse analysis adopts what David Silverman (1999) has called an “aesthetic for social research”, an aesthetic of smallness and slowness. Slowing analysis down to the very small, and reading a short section over and again, can give rise to surprising features of social data and, in the best cases, lead to sophisticated analyses and theorization. In this sense, my interest lies in the everyday, apparently mundane practices involved in the constitution of, and struggles over, what counts as worth knowing in today’s schools.

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6 My account glosses over two debates surrounding the concept of ‘discourse’ in German-speaking publications. In the first, it has been suggested that the approach to discourse analysis which I adopt should not be viewed as discourse analysis proper (Diskursanalyse; Keller et al. 2006: 11). Unfortunately, the fruitful implications of differentiating between ‘discourse’ (uncountable) and ‘discourses’ (countable) has not been possible in German debates, since translations have regularly overlooked the epistemological import of an uncountable noun (e.g. in the translated Potter 2006). Where ‘discourse’ (uncountable) refers to “the social activity of making meanings with language and other symbolic systems in some particular kinds of setting”; ‘discourses’ (countable) refers to “particular kinds of discourses […] which are produced as a result of certain social habits that we have as a community” e.g. biological, medical, psychoanalytical religious, pornographic discourse about sexuality (Lemke 1995: 6). The second debate is about a distinction between ‘discourses’ (in the countable sense just outlined) and ‘practice’, where the two concepts are set in opposition to one another (Reckwitz 2008a). This spurious distinction collapses with a practice-theoretical understanding of discourse.
In this study, in addition to the research fields outlined in Section 2, I draw on several discourse-analytical traditions which adopt this aesthetic of smallness and slowness. Linguistic pragmatics (e.g. Verschueren 2012), linguistic anthropology (e.g. Silverstein and Urban 1996), ethnomethodological discursive psychology (e.g. Wiggins and Potter 2008) and critical discourse analysis (e.g. Fairclough 1989) provide tools for “tying ethnography down” (Rampton et al. 2004: 4) to situated (micro-)practices of knowledge circulation in the educational field. The specific “tools” are introduced as required in the analyses.

4 The educational publishing industry
Before turning to the six published papers, this section briefly sketches the field of educational publishing, highlighting economic relations and future challenges.

Corporate concentration is a key word in the world of educational publishing. Where the textbook market was divided among 288 independent publishers in 1906, and 80 in 1925 (Kreusch 2012: 225), at the time of writing, three major publishing houses dominate the educational publishing market in Germany.\(^7\) Indeed, Klett, Cornelsen and Westermann dominate not only the educational field but also the general publishing market in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They are regularly listed in the top five publishers in these three countries, along with Springer and Random House (buchreport 2014). Table 1 indicates their ranking among global book publishers, including figures for the two largest textbook publishers worldwide as comparison (data from Publishers Weekly 2012, 2013, 2014).

\(^7\) Approximately 50% of the publishing houses in the early twentieth century published only one textbook each (Kreusch 2012: 225).
Table 1. Global ranking and revenue for leading textbook publishing groups worldwide and in Germany

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<td>McGraw-Hill Education</td>
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<td>Klett</td>
<td>Klett Gruppe</td>
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<td>Cornelsen</td>
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<td>Westermann Verlagsguppe</td>
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Textbook publishers with a strong market presence in the early twentieth century, such as Diesterweg, Oldenbourg, Schöningh, Schroedel and the GDR publisher Volk & Wissen, have been integrated into the three big players. This cross-ownership has greatly reduced the number of independent publishing houses producing textbooks and other educational media for schools in Germany. According to industry statistics, approximately 30,000 authors, mostly teachers, are involved in producing educational media in Germany; 8,000 new titles (print and digital) were made available in 2013 (Verband Bildungsmedien e.V. 2014a, 8).

International competition is an intriguing aspect of the textbook market in Germany. Publishing houses will often lament the challenges and difficulties of publishing textbooks for such a complex educational landscape, with 16 federal states, 20 different types of schools, 50 subjects, 3,000 policy curricula, 40,000 educational institutions, 700,000 teachers and 12 million students (Feldmann 2010). The country of Germany does thus not comprise one market for textbooks, but multiple, relatively small markets. This complexity, however, is a major factor in the market strength of the German publishers: Only German publishers have insights into the different requirements for the federal states (interview with publishing executive, 17 June 2009). International publishers with strong global sales (e.g. Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press in the field of English as a foreign language) are barely present in the

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8 For McGraw-Hill Education, the most recent data available for 2012 were the 2011 figures.
German market (Brandenburg 2006: 17). Again, this significantly reduces the number of publishers supplying materials to public schools in Germany.

However, at the same time as the concentration among publishing houses intensifies, an increasing number of other organizations and people are taking on a knowledge-constituting role in schools by producing free materials. An ongoing study at the University of Augsburg has identified 900,000 free digital materials available for teachers (Matthes 2012). These are produced by, for instance, charities, churches, teachers, non-profits and for-profit organizations. Of the largest 20 companies in Germany, 15 produce materials for schools (ibid.). A major challenge facing educational publishers is how to find a viable model for producing digital textbooks or other digital materials, which fit users’ expectations (about sharing work, remixing elements, and low pricing for online materials) with ways of making sufficient economic profit (Matthes, Schütze, and Wiater 2013; Thompson 2005).

Most of the materials currently freely available online do not classify as open educational resources (OER). If OER are understood not only as freely accessible (no-cost) materials, but also as materials which use an open licence enabling adaptation, repurposing and redistribution, and also (in some definitions) open standards and file formats (Muuß-Merholz and Schaumburg 2014; OECD 2007), they constitute a particular challenge for publishing houses. OER as a social movement radically question the for-profit market logic within which the publishing industry operates. In the face of euphoric reporting about, and national and European policy-makers clear support for, open educational resources (European Commission 2013; Koalition 2013), a good deal of energy has been expended by the publishing industry in contesting the quality of open educational resources and assuring the public that paper-based books will still be necessary for schools in the foreseeable future (e.g. Hüppe 2010, cf. Matthes 2014). It is clear that centralization in the formal textbook market is being accompanied by decentralization in the availability of open, or simply cost-free, digital educational resources. Nevertheless, the financial figures in Table 1, especially for Klett and Westermann, do not seem jeopardized by the intense recent discussions about OER in schools.
5 The publications
The six Papers speak in different ways to various dimensions of textbook publishing. Paper 1 gives an overview of the publishing process, identifying a broad range of elements which play a role in the production process. Papers 2 to 6 then explore these elements in more depth through case studies. Each case zooms in on specific elements, e.g. Paper 2 on cultural theory and academic writing; Papers 3 and 4 on networks of institutions and ideas; Paper 5 on economic rationality in the educational sphere; and Paper 6 on developments in educational technology.

5.1 Paper 1. Educational publishers as organizations of discourse production: An ethnographic perspective
If we assume, in line with the studies cited in Section 2.2, that policy curricula are not implemented in a straightforward manner into textbooks, what does this imply about the actors involved in creating textbooks? Paper 1 gives a broad-sweep overview of publishing practices. Drawing on insights gleaned throughout the 18 months of fieldwork at educational publishing houses in Germany, it develops a recursive-circular model of publishers as participants in a dynamic process of discourse circulation. Educational publishers iteratively reproduce and/or transform discourse which is circulating through institutional and thematic networks.

The paper aims to capture some of the complex relations and entanglements among various participants in the production process. At the same time, it analytically separates the ensemble of human and nonhuman actants – social, political, cultural, material, discursive elements – into three ‘spaces’ impacting on the development of textbooks (see Fig. 3).

![Fig. 3. Recursive-circular model of textbook production](image-url)
‘Production space’ refers to the situated practices in the physical and digital spaces where publishing takes place, i.e. the editors’ offices, the printing press, the graphic design software, the hotel meeting rooms, the authors’ laptops, etc. In the production space, authors are selected, corporate design is created, and resources (economic, material, semiotic and personnel) are allocated. Layout becomes a specific active participant in the construction of textbook content, by demanding the deletion of two lines or the addition of three words in order to create an aesthetically pleasing page design. Similarly, the algorithm which selects particular photographs during a search in an image database actively co-constructs the multimodal meaning potential of a given textbook page.

Of course, the material-discursive elements I have identified above (layout, algorithms, economic resources, etc.) are not acting alone. My aim here is not to extend the notion of autonomous agency associated with metaphysical individualism onto autonomous material participants (Barad 2007: 56). Instead, to point to the intimate entanglement of agencies which themselves emerge as agencies through their joint work in producing a textbook. The layout was designed by a team of designers together with the affordances of their software, its source code and the materiality of the almost A4-sized textbook pages. This layout then interacts with the authors and editor, their software, the editor’s open office door, the voices of the editor’s colleagues in the hall while she is making decisions about which words to delete or add, the outsourcing of copy-editing – to name just a few elements involved in ‘deciding’ what knowledge is most relevant within the production space.

‘Structurally connected relevancy spaces’ refer to institutions and organizations which are linked to textbook production by their provision of legally binding directives (e.g. Ministries of Education [Kultusministerien], federal state curricula, educational standards) and non-binding guidelines (e.g. from the Council of Europe, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance), or by their economic purchasing power (e.g. schools which adopt the textbooks). Schools play a great role here, since authors are generally fulltime teachers, and bring their classroom experiences, and their experiences with other teachers, into discussions of which content to include, and how to present that content. This space can be imagined as a network of institutional nodes, with some nodes more enduring, e.g. Kultusministerien who are constantly linked through their legally binding provision of policy curricula, and others nodes more transient, e.g. the
Anne Frank House in Amsterdam which joined the network for a particular project on the Holocaust and then moved into the background after the project was completed.

‘Thematically connected relevancy spaces’ refer to the horizons of intelligibility in which authors are entwined. These networks are not among formalized institutions or organizations, but among what could be called ideas, norms, common-sense understandings or discursive formations. The first illustrative example in Paper 1 shows how gender history has reached the horizon of this relevancy space, in that two authors ‘Ingo’ and ‘Frank’ discuss it in relation to Ingo’s sense of unease with the way women are portrayed in the history textbook they are writing. But it is not sufficiently visible on the horizon to be entextualized (i.e. shifted from this spoken text during the author meeting into the written text of the textbook). In the second example in Paper 1, a sense of postcolonial history is enacted in the discussion, including the importance of the history of China, India and decolonization to the twentieth century. In this latter case, the horizon of intelligibility is so visible that the author team decide to include a new chapter, not required by the policy curriculum, in order to offer students more world knowledge and to interrupt the “embarrassingly provincial” (Frank) policy curriculum.

These spaces, although separated for analytical purposes here, are intricately interwoven in everyday publishing work. A perspective, drawing loosely on selective insights from systems theory, enables a view of the practices from a helicopter perspective. By drawing attention somewhat away from the everyday practices, this perspective helped me to gain a view of the multiple elements involved in the production process, especially the more-than-human participants. From this 10,000 foot perspective, I found it easier to adopt a more ‘symmetrical’ approach to the agencies involved (Latour 2007). Ethnography, on the other hand, through its methods of talking and hanging out, generally affords a foregrounding of the human participants over the nonhuman.9

The overall aim of Paper 1 was to emphasize the recursive, non-linear ways in which educational publishers are imbricated in discourse production, i.e. the production of what counts as worth knowing. Following this are four cases which move in from this 10,000 foot perspective to a closer, on-the-ground investigation of what kind of discourse is produced and how shifts in discursive formations become visible. These

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9 For reflections on combining systems theory with various forms of micro-analysis, including ethnomethodology and discourse analysis, see Vogt 2007; for a comparison of the political theories proposed by Foucault and Luhmann, see Kabobel 2011.
cases engage with the entangled practices of everyday professional work. Each begins in the production space, with the textbook or other material as the ‘thing’ to be followed, yet also makes links to the dynamics of other (institutional and thematic) relevancy spaces.

5.2 Paper 2. Writing the history of the victors? Discourse, social change and (radical) democracy

Paper 2, co-authored with Ellen Van Praet, draws on a one-hour segment from an author meeting conducted during the development of History 9/10 (pseudonym), a history textbook for secondary school grades 9 and 10. Focus of the discussion was a manuscript section titled “Revolution in Germany – A strained new beginning” within the chapter on the Weimar Republic. The specific research questions addressed are (1) How are interpretations of the November Revolution in 1918 articulated, contested and manifested during the development of History 9/10, and (2) What do these everyday, mundane practices say about contemporary conceptions of (radical) democracy?

Adopting the research aesthetic of smallness, slowness and everydayness, the Paper traces two apparently contradictory aspects of the ways in which the November Revolution is presented in the final published book. On the one hand, the Weimar constitution is revalorized. The manuscript, which was discussed during the meeting, included a textbox with the title “Problematic provisions of the Weimar constitution”. The author team’s critique of this textbox as offering a one-sidedly negative view of the constitution led to changes which can be read as providing a largely positive account of the constitution.

At the same time, however, the textbook also revalorizes the worker and soldier councils, compared to the representations in previous textbooks. Mobilising a range of persuasive strategies, from historical research to his own classroom practice, one author argues strongly that the worker and soldier councils were not, as described in the manuscript (and in previous textbooks), anti-democratic, dramatic and dangerous. Instead, he argues, the councils were quite peaceful; they were simply trying to organize supplies for the people. The comparison of the manuscript text with the published text indeed illustrates a de-dramatization of the councils, who are disarticulated from dangerous, Soviet, anti-democratic tendencies.
The Paper then links these situated observations to broader discursive shifts in flamboyant cultural theory (associated with figures such as Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou, and including philosophy conferences such as On the Idea of Communism and films such as Michael Moore’s Capitalism: A Love Story), and in academic writing for a broad audience (including historians’ work on communism or anarchism as movements with continued appeal today, and popular books by political scientists, sociologists and philosophers who conclude that socialism is highly relevant today). In both of these fields, claims are being made that the discursive terrain has shifted.

On a methodological level, the Paper demonstrates how exploring the situated practice of negotiating meaning in educational sites, including publishing houses, through ethnographic discourse analysis enables the identifications of ambiguities and fissures in, alongside the solidities and stickiness of, discursive configurations. The Paper’s central conclusion is that although liberal commentators such as the philosopher John Gray have dismissed the recent surge in interest in radical democracy or communism as relevant only to a marginal group of cultural theorists, we can trace a similar fissure, albeit very subtle and fragile, in conventional curricular conceptions of democracy – in what the older generation chooses to tell younger generations about democracy – in these apparently mundane, professional practices of writing history textbooks.

5.3 Paper 3. Translating globalization theories into educational research: Thoughts on recent shifts in Holocaust education

The case study in Paper 3, co-authored with Barbara Christophe, is based on observations of the development of a set of worksheets to accompany The Search, a graphic novel which tells the story of Esther, a young Jewish woman who was hidden in the Netherlands during WWII before emigrating to the USA, and who is now, many years later, trying to find out more about her family and friends. In the story, she discovers that her parents were killed at Auschwitz. The Paper draws the practices of producing these materials, together with recent cultural and social theory, to offer a novel conception of globalization for educational research.

A forceful strand of educational research on globalization states that a central aim of contemporary schooling should be to prepare students to meet the challenges of globalization and to participate successfully in an increasingly globalized world. Paper 3
suggests that although this is an important goal of education which encourages innovation in practice and policy, it presents globalization as an entity to which students and teachers can merely react. The case study serves to illustrate the Paper’s central argument that we need also to explore the ways in which educational practices actively produce globalizations.

Three sensitizing concepts, collated from the research literature, are brought together in this paper. First, globalization as a cognitive shift: The term globalization flags, not a specifically determinable intensification of global flows, since that was always already part of modernization, but the increasing public perception of the world as interdependent, of geographic space as shrinking, and of one’s own perspective as particular and contingent. What is new about globalization is the cognitive shift in the way the world is perceived by observers, which in turn shapes the reality in which these observers act. Second, globalization as the expansion of global relevancy spaces: This cognitive shift is (re)produced by individuals in one place increasingly engaging with institutions or ideas in distant parts of the world when they are gathering information relevant to their specific decision-making practices. Third, globalization as new forms of subjectivation: By increasingly observing more distant discursive configurations, new ways of living are made possible, desirable or inescapable.

These three concepts are illustrated in the Paper with examples from work creating the materials to teach with The Search. This work, which takes place within a global network of institutions and ideas, shapes a newly empathetic, affective student-subject who is able to live with uncertainty, ambivalence and irresolvable contradictions. The Paper concludes that these teaching and learning resources – and their production practices – are participating in transforming memories of the Holocaust. They are thus not only reacting to, but actively (co)producing, forms of globalization.

5.4 Paper 4. Global subjects: An ethnographic study of educational media production and forms of subjectivation

Paper 4 takes a closer look at the practices articulating this student-subject during the production of The Search materials. Drawing on poststructuralist theories of the subject and close micro-analysis of language (and semiotic) practices, the paper discusses extracts from meetings in which the author team, including a specialist advisor from the
Anne Frank Centre in Berlin, designed and revised the worksheets and accompanying teachers’ notes.

Findings suggest that while the Holocaust has traditionally been seen as a matter of ‘national’ responsibility, *The Search* teaching materials invite readers to see it as (global/universal) ‘individualized’ responsibility. The analysis clarifies two dimensions of this new perspective which were briefly mentioned in Paper 3. First, a *universal-ethical dimension* in which student-readers are addressed as subjects who can identify with others far beyond their own national or ethnic boundaries, for instance, with Esther, an elderly Jewish woman, originally from the Netherlands and now living in the USA. Second, a *contingency-tolerant dimension* in which student-readers are addressed as subjects who perceive, reflexively observe and relatively unproblematically accept the particularity, contingency and instability of their own – and others’ – perspectives. Destabilizing knowledge (‘irritieren’) was enacted as a key pedagogical method to achieve the latter. Thus a universal-ethical and contingency-tolerant (global) subject is rendered legible, legitimate and desirable.

Paper 4 also, however, points to fissures and paradoxes in these forms of subjectivation. The universal-ethical dimension, while opening up potentials for increasing respect and solidarity with diverse people, and decreasing exclusionary practices of othering, is simultaneously, and very subtly, semiotically represented in *The Search* along the conventionally dominant axes of whiteness, heterosexuality, nuclear family and able-bodiedness. The contingency-tolerant dimension is fissured by the attempt to offer teachers stable, certain, non-contingent knowledge. Teachers are sometimes addressed as those whose knowledge should be productively destabilized and sometimes addressed as those-who-need-to-know the right answers. In the latter case, they are given a hierarchical stable position over the students whose knowledge is to be destabilized.

Overall, Paper 4 extends the arguments of Paper 3, arguing that these materials constitute a mundane, everyday element shaping new (global) ways of being, i.e., social relations and practices, forms of solidarity and sociality, ethics and knowledge. The apparently paradoxical aspects of the global subject shape not only the dynamics of Holocaust education but also of globalization itself.
5.5 Paper 5. Bildungsmedienverlage: Zur Ökonomisierung in der Schulbuchproduktion

Paper 5 starts from the observation of two complementary understandings of ‘economic rationality’ in the research literature. It can refer first, in a narrow sense, to the outsourcing of educational products to the private sector, and the increasing prominence of a corporate vocabulary in the field of education, such as quality management, efficiency, best practices, output monitoring. It can also refer, in a broader sense, to the emergence of the ‘entrepreneurial self’, i.e. personalised learning, digital autonomy, the subject of competence.

This Paper picks up both these themes. It first describes central changes in the production of school-based educational media in Germany, e.g. increasing procedural authorization, corporate consolidation and decentralization. It argues that these changes are strengthening the role of a (narrowly understood) economic rationality in mediating knowledge for schools.

The main aim of Paper 5, however, is to offer an ethnographic reading of one particular (and quite unusual) case in which the narrow and broad sense of economic rationality meet. In this case, market factors play an undeniably strong role in the publishing process, and the entrepreneurial self is brought sharply into focus: The editorial work for Politik I (a textbook for Politics/Economics, Grades 9/10, Gymnasium, small federal state) has been outsourced to a freelance editor, the two authors have been selected due to their ability to market the book well, and both authors’ informal statements indicate an economically and politically neoliberal stance. The Paper thus asks: (1) what unfolds in concrete instances in which the private sector selects ‘what counts as worth knowing’, (2) is the ‘entrepreneurial self’ as coherent a construct as previous literature implies, and (3) what broader conclusions can be drawn from this case study about the role of an economic rationality in today’s educational media production?

Unsurprisingly perhaps, given its prominence and constitutive status in contemporary neoliberal discourse, the figure of the ‘entrepreneurial self’ appears in the meeting talk and the textbook. Entrepreneurial society values the self who acts responsibly, calculates rationally and maximizes status and self-productivity in all

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10 This same case has been discussed in slightly more detail in Macgilchrist 2017.
spheres of life. Paper 5, however, also identifies moments in which this entrepreneurial self is interrupted by two elements. Selected tasks for the students which entextualize the higher order competences required by the policy curriculum, for instance, open up possibilities for a radical critique of contemporary economic relations.

The Paper concludes by noting the irony that precisely this orientation to competences, which is so often associated with shaping an entrepreneurial self, is entangled with the question-raisinng and critique associated with a quite different, and more socially critical, student-subject. ‘Critique’, understood as critique of society’s conditions, appears to be regaining a more prominent place in the drafting of contemporary textbooks.

5.6 Paper 6. E-Schulbücher, iPads und Interpassivität: Reflexionen über neue schulische Bildungsmedien und deren Subjektivationspotential

In Paper 6, I draw on media and discourse theories to reflect on digital textbooks. As in the previous Papers, I am interested here in forms of subjectivation, but also in the concrete affordances of digital textbooks and the potentials opened up by digital technologies for students, activists or other interested persons to create and disseminate counter-hegemonic knowledge projects. The Paper focuses in particular on digital products and advertising for the iPad, which had entered the textbook market with great fanfare just before this article was written. It discusses three (overlapping) aspects mobilized in text and talk about digital textbooks: materiality (digital textbooks save students from chronic back pain; users can dive into images, rotate objects, etc.), social relations (individualized and personalized learning; the affordances of digital materials to rethink teacher-student power hierarchies), and interactivity (zooming, panning and swiping through images; manipulating 3-D objects; watching videos).

Advertising for these digital textbooks, the Paper concludes, maps well to the understanding of ‘media life’ as it is conceptualized in contemporary media theory. This theory draws on the argument that people (in the global North) no longer live ‘with’ media, we live ‘in’ media; digital and screen media accompany every aspect of our contemporary lives. The corollary for educational media is that students do not learn ‘with’ media, but ‘in’ media. A particularly critical feature is, however, the concept of interactivity. The Paper wonders about the interactivity of the currently available digital features, suggesting that ‘interpassivity’ may be a more appropriate word. Where
interactive media aim to make users active, interpassive media make users passive by taking on the active role themselves. Classic examples are the choir in Greek tragedies which expresses fear or sympathy for the spectators, and the canned laughter of US television series which laughs for the audience. In one advertisement for textbooks on the iPad, a speaker says “It’s all automatically organized for you, so you just don’t have to think about it”. Students are invited to delegate their thinking to the technological tool. In a similar vein, a key feature of contemporary media life is the ability for users to remix, repurpose and redistribute materials. Current digital textbooks do not encourage students to participate in these ‘produsage’ practices. As Section 4 above noted, digital tools are nevertheless making it increasingly easy for a broad range of persons and organizations to produce materials for students to use in schools.

6 Discussion
Drawing these six Papers together, in this section I discuss two issues in more depth. First, on a conceptual level, how do these Papers inform our understanding of educational publishing in general, in ways that go beyond the accounts of publishing practices already available in the literature? Second, on a phronetic (ethically practical) level, what insights do they provide for those actively aiming to transform the programmatic curriculum?

6.1 Educational publishing practices

6.1.1 Step 1: Classifying
Paper 1 makes an analytical separation into three ‘spaces’, each including specific people and things which operate together to produce textbooks for schools. Papers 2 to 6 narrow in on specific global and local, human and more-than-human, implicit and explicit elements which interact in the delicate calibration and recalibration of everyday, apparently mundane publishing practices. Reading across these Papers, several on-the-ground practices can be identified which play a role in the selection processes at work in educational publishing, and thus have political valence for knowledge practices in schooling. Here I will highlight particular practices (some noted in Section 5 above; all
One core set of practices is worth highlighting in the ‘production space’, i.e., the physical and digital spaces where publishing takes place, including the editors’ offices, printing press, and authors’ computers:

1. Market orientation. Unsurprisingly, numerous practices in the publishing process are directly oriented to achieving profitability. In-house editors or editors-in-chief select authors for a textbook project according to how well-placed they are to market the product, and/or with names that will assure customers of the quality of the book (Papers 1, 5). An editor-in-chief makes a very rare appearance at an author meeting to emphasize the importance of Nordrhein-Westfalen as a market (Paper 1). A freelance editor optimizes the time he spends on a project for a small federal state (Paper 5). These are clear examples of the market orientation of professional practice in this field. More subtle, is that substantial amounts of time are spent during author meetings negotiating not only with the author team but also with the layout (the number of lines per page, the expected proportion of visual material) about where a particular diagram can fit in the chapter (Paper 2, cf. Norton 2005 on the restrictions set by page limits and Macgilchrist 2014 on the multimodal design of a section on Africa in the Middle Ages). Since the time for a project is budgeted, and deadlines are pressing, this time spent discussing layout is time which is not spent discussing other issues, such as pedagogic appropriateness, scholarly accuracy or political relevance. In addition, design decisions with potential subjectivation effects are sometimes made at a late stage, leaving no time for authors to make further changes (Paper 4).

Further observations from my fieldwork support the scholarly literature which notes, for instance that the decision to create a new book or adapt an already existing book is itself made by first analyzing the market to assess the size of the market, strength of the competition, and estimated profit margin (Hessenauer 2006). The trialling of textbooks in classroom practice is often highlighted by publishers (Verband Bildungsmedien e.V. 2014b) but is more often omitted in

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11 The ‘spaces’ in Paper 1 are, of course, analytical separations which aim to serve as a heuristic, not foundational clear-cut boundaries. The dimensions listed here in Section 6 cut to a certain extent across the spaces. Nevertheless, for ease of reading, I have described them here in relation to the three spaces.
practice, since “the lengthy process of development did not allow any further delay of the publication deadline. [The textbook] had to go to market simultaneously with the release of the new syllabus” (Pogelschek 2007, 105).

It has been argued that the primary factor guiding the selection of content in the for-profit educational publishing industry is market viability (Manza, Sauder, and Wright 2010; Sewall and Emberling 1998). This is contested by voices within the industry who describe authors autonomously deciding which content to include and how to present it (Norton 2005), or who argue that textbooks are simply a reflection of what teachers want (Flynn 1990). Each of these argues that one ‘factor’ is the single determining node which selects content. I will return to this kind of ‘nodal talk’ in Section 6.2. First, several other sets of practices impacting on content selection must be considered. In the production space, for instance, delegation is a significant dimension which previous research has not discussed.

2. Knowledge delegation. Selecting content always also means de-selecting content which will not be included. One issue (displaced persons) is deemed more relevant for another chapter in the same book (Paper 1). Technological innovation invites students to delegate their thinking to the automatic organization on the iPad (Paper 6). The students at Gymnasien are assumed not to know about social inequality; knowledge about social inequality is delegated to other parts of society (Paper 5). Further observations from the fieldwork include delegating an issue to another subject, e.g. a Politics author team decides an issue is more relevant for a Geography textbook (fieldnotes, 18.04.2010). In each case, the argument is mobilized that the issue is being dealt with ‘elsewhere’ (in the textbook, the school curriculum, the society, or through the technology). Interestingly, textbooks for Social Studies, in which one author team writes all the Geography, History and Politics sections, and which thus hinder the delegation of critical issues to other proximate subjects, include the most critical/creative/post-colonial engagement with cultural hybridity (Macgilchrist 2011).

One selection practice is particularly central in the ‘structurally connected relevancy spaces’, to which I count the institutions and organizations linked to textbook production by their provision of legally binding directives or non-binding guidelines, or by their economic purchasing power.
3. Procedural authorization. The formal procedures associated with textbooks in Germany have traditionally given them their final, legal authorization. Textbooks are written according to formal policy curricula. The associated legal obligations, slightly different for each federal state, include a set of procedural steps, from finalising a textbook, sending it to the state Ministry of Education (Kultusministerium), having it reviewed, incorporating any recommended changes (or explicitly justifying why recommendations are not being implemented), receiving official approval (Zulassung) and finally being included in the list of officially approved textbooks which schools can purchase. This procedural authorization, in place since 1923 (Kreusch 2012: 224), is described in almost every account of textbook publishing in Germany, and is generally seen as a central factor determining which content is selected (see Section 2, in particular Fig. 1).

Two observations from this study suggest that these formal procedures are more malleable or fissured that the research literature suggests. First, salient political issues, such as which forms of political organization count as democratic are not mandated by current policy curricula with their focus on outputs and competences rather than input and content (Paper 2). The negotiation over these issues is enacted at a far more detailed level than the approval schemes deal with. Second, particular aspects of the curriculum can be played down (Paper 5) or supplemented (Paper 1, cf. Macgilchrist 2011 for ways in which the homogenising concept of ‘cultural areas’ [Kulturräume, Kulturerdteile] in, for instance, Thüringen’s Geography curriculum, have been critically subverted). These content reductions, additions and subversions passed the reviewers and/or approval procedures.

In fact, and this is the second observation, the book I have called Politik I was produced for a federal state which has foregone its formal approval system: no textbooks now go through an approval process in Berlin, Hamburg, Saarland and Schleswig-Holstein (Paper 5; Stöber 2010). Other federal states have reduced the approval procedures to self-disclosure acts: The review process is replaced by the submission of a letter written by the publishing house in which it confirms that its book does not infringe the constitution, and fulfils the policy curriculum.12 Further

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12 Each federal state has slightly different requirement. For an overview, see Stöber, 2010.
changes are also pending as the relevant parties (e.g. Kultusministerien and communal entities which pay for curricular materials) begin to deal with digital resources, revising, for instance, the regulations governing which curricular resources can currently be purchased with state money (textbooks) and which cannot (some types of hardware and software) (Bernadette Thielen [Medienberatung NRW], personal communication, 2014).

A host of dimensions can be listed in the ‘thematically connected relevancy spaces’, i.e., the horizons of intelligibility in which authors are entwined; the flows of ideas, norms, common-sense understandings within material discursive configurations.

4. **Pedagogical goals.** Pedagogical theories are implicitly mobilized at author meetings. Learning, for instance, is assumed to operate through active engagement and classroom discussions: Such discussions are to be enabled through the use of question marks in chapter headings (Paper 5) or through texts which enable controversial discussions instead of providing clear evaluations (Paper 2). Authors discuss whether students have the necessary previous knowledge of key terms such as ‘human rights’ to engage with the task at hand (Paper 4). Knowledge destabilization (irritieren) is enacted as a key pedagogical method (Paper 4; cf. Hoffarth, Klingler, and Plößer 2013). Individualization and personalization are central in discussions about, and advertising for, digital textbooks (Paper 6).

5. **Scholarly accuracy.** The accuracy of subject-specific knowledge is a core feature discussed at author meetings. Something like gender history is needed to deal appropriately with male and female roles in history (Paper 1). A particular policy curriculum is embarrassing in its omission of events and places which historians consider relevant for understanding twentieth century history (Paper 1). The piles of corpses regularly included in Holocaust educational materials show an incorrectly perceived reality (Paper 3). Historians’ books are mobilized in an argument for the de-dramatization of the historically validated peacable role of the worker and soldier councils in 1918 (Paper 4).

6. **Ethical appropriateness.** For particular subjects, ethics play a more significant role than others. In Holocaust education, for instance, the Überwältigungsverbot is to be upheld: Teaching and learning materials should relinquish a dehumanizing shock pedagogy or pedagogy of concern, and instead invite students to enter
empathetic relations with diverse global people (Paper 4), thus doing justice to individual biographies (Paper 3).

Observations in this study bear out the continued importance of these three dimensions, pedagogical goals, scholarly accuracy and ethical appropriateness, which have been discussed in the previous literature (see Fig. 1). Two further dimensions are worth emphasizing, since they played out across the whole period of fieldwork, and their relevance is controversial.

7. Imagined readers/users. The production process includes imaginings of potential future readers and users: Digital textbooks are marketed as perfectly suited to young people’s contemporary media lives (Paper 6). Research studies are mobilized to imagine today’s student suffering from chronic back pain and poor posture due to heavy printed textbooks (Paper 6). Authors debate whether their teacher readers still want to teach the council system in detail or whether it is no longer a model for the future (Paper 2). Students are imagined as having or desiring certainty in knowledge, which the authors aim to destabilize (Paper 4). Teachers are imagined as desiring certainty in knowledge, which should be provided (to a certain extent) and also destabilized (to a certain extent) (Paper 4). Imagined readers are not only teachers and students, but also other observers who have critiqued overly GDR-friendly representations in the past (Paper 1), and local and global lobbyists, pressure groups, civil society actors or further organizations who actively attempt to influence future textbook representations (Paper 1).

8. Echoing the circulating discourse. The majority of textbooks published in Germany are adaptations of previous textbooks in the same series rather than entirely newly developments (Paper 1). Seventy percent of a politics textbook from one federal state is to be taken over unchanged when the book is adapted for another federal state (Paper 5). Matthias Heyl’s model of The Society of the Holocaust has been used in previous educational practice (Paper 4). Other textbooks offer the materials to compare parliamentary democracy with the council system (Paper 2). Further observations from my fieldwork support the scholarly literature which notes how textbooks from one publishing house “clone” the competitors’ books by reproducing very similar ways of dealing with issues and structuring the overall content (Manza, Sauder, and Wright 2010: 280). Rare
was the author meeting that I participated in, in which the competitors’ books were not lying on the table. These practices, similar to journalists’ “ cribbing” of ideas from other media (Doyle 2006: 448), can lead to a certain ‘ echoing’ of particular issues, values, representations across a wide range of textbooks. Echoing is not, however, only about cloning and canonization. Further discourse that was circulating during my fieldwork period, and which I have (tentatively) linked to changes in textbook content, includes cultural theory and popular academic texts that were reconceptualising democracy (Paper 2), neoliberal discourse shaping an entrepreneurial self (Paper 5), and the increasing articulation of the Holocaust with generic issues of tolerance, anti-discrimination and human rights (Paper 3).

These two sets of practices are intimately entangled. For Jeff Manza, Michael Sauder and Nathan Wright (2010), imagining the user and echoing discourse are simply instances of how the market shapes content. The audience is a market fiction, the lowest common denominator, only relevant to the publishing process in its role as customers who constrain novelty (cf. Perlmutter 1997). Cloning the successful competition is done to ensure sales and serves to hinder innovation. As noted above, this has been contested by authors and publishers who stress that, firstly, it is not an imagined audience but a real audience of teachers, whose views on what they want are reflected in the content offered by textbooks, and, secondly, it is the textbook authors who decide what to retain and what to drop as they revise and adapt older versions, not market specialists or editors. It has also been contested by the author teams I joined, who assured themselves and me that the competitors’ books were not there to be copied, but just to see how the others deal with the challenges posed by the policy curriculum.

This latter comment from the author teams serves to complicate the over-simplifications offered by the cited literature. On a practical level, it illustrates the pragmatic insight that authors are using the competition and imagined users as practical tools to help them accomplish certain things, such as writing, revising and finalising their chapters (Illouz 2008, 5). On a more general level, these two sets of practices – imagining the user and echoing – tap into Michael Warner’s discussion of the “ reflexive circulation of discourse” (Warner 2002: 62). For Warner, the creation of a public is intricately interwoven with the creation of meaning. Meaning is not made through a single text, but through “the concatenation of texts through time” and “the interactive character of
public discourse” (2002: 62f., cf. Bakhtin 1981). The notion of circulation points to the inadequacy of sender-receiver or author-reader models of public communication which are “so misleading” (Warner 2002: 62). These dyadic models see media communication as a form of conversation or argument (i.e., utterance-response) rather than a more entangled web of interactive relations among various participants, including authors, readers, corporate design, printing presses, onlookers, passers-by, and previous and future texts. These final two dimensions in my list thus draw attention to the flow of discourse in society, or what Warner calls the “multigeneric lifeworld organized not just by a relational axis of utterance and response, but by potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization” (2002: 63).

The potentially infinite axis of (iterative) citation in turn, leads me to my second set of observations about educational publishing practices and the shaping of what knowledge counts as most worthwhile for schooling.

6.1.2 Step 2: Entangling
The list in Section 6.1.1 must be understood as provisional, not exhaustive. Changes are ongoing, in particular in the face of the increasing digitization of educational materials. The list does, however, highlight what I see as some of the most illuminating lines of inquiry into textbook publishing practices. The list, however, simultaneously subverts its own clear categories. At this stage, I wish to return to a metaphor which has haunted this text from the start: ‘entanglement’ and ‘tangle’, a metaphor which I observe emerging in a range of disciplinary contexts (e.g. Barad 2007; Basu 2011; Butler, Laclau, and Žižek 2000, 156; Childers 2013; Conrad, Randeria, and Regina 2013; Epple and Lindner 2011; Latour 2003, 38; Sturken 1997; Ware 2013).

Although analytical separation into separate spaces and dimensions (or, in other theoretical vocabularies: actors, actants, factors, agencies, etc.) which influence one another is a useful first step in approaching the field, is it a useful final step in mapping how the field operates? Judith Butler warns that if we abstract away from a specific example too quickly, we “avoid the rather messy psychic and social entanglement that presents itself in the example” (Butler, Laclau, and Žižek 2000, 156). Is the previous research in this field, which identifies different categories, not ultimately unsatisfactory precisely because any substantial classification inevitably requires a concession that
these categories work together in a mutually reinforcing and ‘messy’ way (e.g. Hessenauer 2006; Perlmutter 1997)?

Reflecting on classification (im)possibilities, I hope to complexify the list which Section 6.1.1 presents. However, even in complexifying, I feel a visualization is useful. Drawing the insights from the six Papers together, I imagine a tangled sketch of educational publishing practices (see Fig. 4). In this sketch, I situate the textbook in the centre. It is, in this particular diagram, a paper book, but could easily be sketched as a tablet/digital textbook. The book has lines coursing through it. These lines meet at the textbook, and take off again in other directions. The textbook is one meeting point, operating (here, in this instance) as the nexus where the lines meet. Other meeting points are located at other things, people, ideas, etc., where further multiple threads meet. Alexandra Binnenkade’s work on history education, for instance, places the classroom as the central meeting points of a multitude of incoming lines.

In contrast to previous visualizations, my aim in Fig. 4 is to deliberately highlight the overlaps and tangles. In this sense, the sketch is inspired by the anthropological orientation to following the thing (Marcus 1995), where we begin with a particular material-discursive thing, in this case the textbook, and follow it through (some of) the concatenations of texts, people and other material-discursive things which have shaped it and which it shapes.

Classification is, of course, eminently part of analytical work, and there is great utility in simplifying social dynamics into component parts in order to identify how different aspects work in different logics. But at the same time, the analytical merit of not untangling is less frequently foregrounded in the social sciences, and thus perhaps worth exploring in more depth (for a discussion of the advantages and drawbacks of drawing analytical boundaries, see Van Dyk et al. 2014; on classification as scientific practice, see Bowker and Star 1999 on mess in social science research, see Law 2004).

I could add ‘lines of flight’ to the model which lead away from the centre. These would illustrate the ways in which practices are oriented away from mainstream publishing, rather than those engaged in producing or contesting this mainstream. This is particularly relevant as more digital educational media become available, especially open educational resources, which offer radically different kinds of knowledge, e.g. Attac’s materials on anti-globalization, or RWE’s materials on climate and energy. However, it speaks to a different aspect of publishing which I do not have space to elaborate in this Habilitation.

Binnenkade’s model interestingly includes a broad range of institutional, political, economic, cultural and social voices which play a role in history education. However, even though she notes that each of these elements again needs to be differentiated into its complex, contradictory and dynamic component parts, her visual conceptualization retains individual strands rather than foreground their overlap.
Fig. 4. The entanglements of educational publishing

The problem with this model is that it looks somewhat static; it implies that the textbook exists as a solid product. Thus, Fig. 5 illustrates a more dynamic model, in which the contours of the ‘textbook’ are themselves shifting and mobile as it is constituted in its interaction with the lines which, in turn, are simultaneously constituted in their interactions with the textbook.\(^\text{16}\) The book is a process, not a product (Jarvis 2009). The textbook undergoes a continuous series of stabilizations and destabilizations, as do the lines, some of which are broken or interrupted. In this sense, the textbook, like other social phenomena, is a fragile and provisional fixation emerging from the struggles over meaning where the lines meet (see Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 105).

\(^{16}\) The dynamic model is inspired by Georg Glasze’s (2007) diagram of poststructuralist understandings of “fragile fixation” of meaning, which draws on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s discourse theory (Laclau 1990; Laclau and Mouffe 1985).
Fig. 5. The shifting, unstable entanglements of educational publishing

Each provisional, partial, contingent line traces the concatenation of diverse elements and practices, including, for instance, the multiple, and often contradictory, practices involved in enacting market orientation, knowledge delegation, procedural authorization, pedagogical goals, scholarly accuracy, ethical appropriateness, imagined users and diverse materialdiscursive echoes. These threads are entangled, with some becoming more salient than others in a given specific case.

6.2 Achieving change in the programmatic curriculum

An important consequence of this type of contingent entangled model of educational publishing, where multiple mutually constituting strands interact to stabilize the knowledge published, is its role as what has been called phronetic research. Bent Flyvbjerg (2001: 56f.) argues that social scientific research should turn towards what Aristotle termed phronesis, i.e. practical knowledge, practical ethics, and situated practical wisdom. This approach emphasizes the “pragmatic, variable, context-dependent”, attends to “ethics” and is “oriented to action” rather than seeking to establish general truths (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 57). It means taking seriously the emergent
empirical observations which interrogate a question previously posed in the scholarly literature on textbooks: “Who defines relevant knowledge?” (Lässig 2010, 199), “which authors manage to push through their contents, methods and general educational concepts” during the textbook development process? (Wiater 2005, 61).

Indeed, many of the textbook authors I spoke with during this project told me that part of their motivation for writing on textbook projects, where it was quite clear they would be making very little financial gain, was to be the kind of author who can change the contents, methods and concepts that previous textbooks have considered legitimate for transmission (interview with author, 2.11.2009; fieldnotes 6.11.2009). I sensed, however, many times a feeling of helplessness in the face of what are often called “constraints” (interview with author, 2.11.2009; cf. Section 2 above) on the authors’ attempts to write in a new, fresh, progressive way. Similarly, scholars and activists who have asked me how they can change textbook contents, regarding e.g. racist or sexist portrayals, have spoken of the frustration they feel when they want to have an impact on textbooks but don’t know who to contact. Who has final decision-making powers, they ask me.

This question speaks to the second issue I wish to discuss here, the dynamics of change in educational publishing. The questions and comments made by authors, scholars and activists, are instances of what I will call ‘nodal talk’. The authors describe a desire to be a node which is a catalyst for change; a node where sufficient strands come together to enable this person to make decisions and push through their own agenda. Scholars and activists describe a desire to locate the node where sufficient strands come together to make this node the key decision-maker; the node which has the power to make or enforce the change. In each case, this nodal talk resonates with much of the research literature on textbook publishing which either describes similar feelings of frustration in implementing one’s own desired change (e.g. Pinto 2007 on her experiences as a textbook author) or empirically identifies one element as the node with the ultimate decision-enforcing power (e.g. Manza, Sauder, and Wright 2010 on how market incentives and constraints shape content; Ninnes, 2001 on curricular prescriptions as the impetus to include new knowledge; Apple, 2000: 46 on the influence of authoritarian populist religious groups on publishers’ ‘self-censorship’ practices).
I return here to Apple’s argument that ethnographically following the textbook production process not only aids our understanding of the multiple relations among culture, politics and economy in the educational field, but is also essential for altering “the kinds of knowledge considered legitimate for transmission in our schools” (Apple 1986, 104). The phronetic purchase of this ethnographic discourse analysis is, I suggest, that the detailed case studies contest nodal talk. They suggest that despite the undoubted relevance of individual nodes, substantial change – in the subject-specific content, the tasks set for students and the teaching and learning methods offered, and thus in the ways student-subjects are addressed – comes about when several lines congeal in a certain direction. Emerging from the study I present here is the insight that the scholarly literature, textbook authors and activists have been asking the wrong question: The question is not ‘which node makes the final decision’, but ‘how can change be organized across entangled, and sometimes contradictory, material-discursive strands’. Describing the strands means identifying multiple access points where change can take place or be pushed forwards. Recognizing the contradictions within and among these contingent strands means this type of phronetic research is “able to come much closer to an analysis of the social dynamics and possibilities of progressive action in education” (Apple 2000: 149).17

For Holocaust education (Papers 3 and 4) this is particularly visible: global networks of institutions work together to identify particular goals to achieve; national interest groups actively contact the publishing house to contest what they see as problematic descriptions; local institutions transform their exhibitions to enable new narratives; global circulations of text and talk participate in locally resignifying how central concepts such as the Überwältigungsverbot are interpreted, and in articulating new connections, e.g. between the Holocaust and universal issues such as human rights and tolerance.

For accounts of the soldier and workers’ councils as (radically) democratic movements (Paper 2), the connections between flamboyant cultural theory, popular academic writing on direct democracy and textbook publishing practices are less explicit. It does appear, however, that in this case several strands are winding together

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17 For scholars interested in discourse theories, new materialist thinking or related theorizing, it may seem evident that change occurs along entangled lines. The purchase of an ethnographic discourse analysis is to supplement a theoretical understanding with detailed empirical work on how entanglement operates in particular cases.
along certain routes. Change, is of course not always progressive. In articulating ways in which elite students should (or should not) critique social inequality (Paper 5), market forces of cost-reduction, outsourcing and efficiency link up with societal text and talk about entrepreneurial selves, and pedagogic discussions about fostering competences. And in addressing an interpassive digital textbook user who is invited to delegate her thinking to the iPad (Paper 6), technological developments align with non-hierarchical approaches to classroom interaction, with pedagogic concepts of individualized and personalized learning, with young people’s always-on, networked, mobile media practices, with societal discussions of heavy backpacks, and with pedagogic discussions of preparing students to participate successfully in the global economy.

Physically present people and things, globally distributed institutions, circulations of text and talk. These are some of the elements distributed through the multiple, overlapping, tangled threads. For some of my colleagues in textbook studies, a contingent, tangled and multidimensional model, which refuses to identify the key ‘nodes’ with decision-making powers, is a sign of analytical negligence; it avoids the question of responsibility (Sebastian Rezat, personal communication, 2014). I have been suggesting here that it is not possible to generalise about individual factors which play a role in textbook production without gross over-simplification. For a more substantial understanding of the field, it is necessary to engage more closely in how individual cases are “relentlessly historically specific” (Haraway 2000: 133). The goal is to trace how the strands interconnect and join to change or to stabilize what counts as worth knowing in a specific case. The generalization which I can offer is that change in the educational publishing field becomes more likely when multiple strands, from several dimensions, become tightly entangled at the same time (where ‘time’ can refer to a period of minutes, months or years).

‘Responsibility’ is nevertheless a vital issue, in particular regarding teachers’ and activists’ frustrated efforts to shape transformations. The model I have described requires a rethinking of the notion of responsibility within the production process. Responsibility is distributed across the mutually constituting tangle.18 Where does this leave the human actors? Does it mean each individual can shrug their shoulders and shift responsibility to other factors (design constraints, time constraints, economic

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18 The term ‘distributed’ flags a link between my thinking here and recent debates about distributed cognition. I find the arguments for a strong version of distribution, and the extended mind, very convincing (e.g. Clark 2010; Hutchins 1996).
constraints, etc.)? Or can a strong argument be made that a tangled model of educational publishing actually assigns more responsibility to individual human actors than an understanding of the field which sees individual humans in a sense ‘boxed in’ by (structural) constraints about which they can do very little?

If I, as author or editor, see myself as constrained by, for instance, market forces, then this explanation, I suggest here, affords me the possibility of retreating from responsibility. In this set of metaphors (constraint, limits, restrictions), I have little opportunity to move. If, however, I see myself as part of an ensemble, a confederation, a tangle of strands, in which each strand is “responsive to the complexities” of the whole (Nichols Goodeve in Haraway 2000: 133), is it not more difficult to relinquish my “responsibility” for the whole? For Donna Haraway, it is clear: “Well, it is people who are ethical, not these nonhuman entities” (2000: 134). Similarly, Jane Bennett suggests that “[p]erhaps the ethical responsibility of an individual human now resides in one’s response to the assemblages in which one finds oneself participating” (Bennett 2010: 37). If agency is distributed across multiple strands of human, social, linguistic, legal, material, etc. elements, the question for the human is whether to disentangle oneself from particular tangles “whose trajectory is likely to do harm”, and to come closer to tangles “whose conglomerate effectivity tends toward the enactment of nobler ends” (ibid.: 37f.). Bennett likens the human part of the confederate agency to riding a bicycle on a gravel road: “One can throw one’s weight this way or that, inflect the bike in one direction or toward one trajectory of motion. But the rider is but one actant operative in the moving whole” (ibid.: 38).

Contrary to previous accounts of educational publishing, the cases presented in this habilitation illustrate how individuals taking responsibility for pushing a particular change forward did indeed lead to changes (albeit small, and fragile) of what counts as worth knowing in the textbooks (in particular Paper 1 on postcolonial horizons and Paper 2 on radical democracy, cf. Macgilchrist 2014 on pre-colonial Africa). These individuals were acting from within complex agentic tangles, in a delicate calibration and recalibration of apparently tiny, mundane everyday professional practices. The complex ensemble includes, but is not limited to, conservative practices. The individual doings were closely intertwined with strings of related doings and sayings: corporate design, layout, past classroom discussions, imaginations of future classroom discussions, search algorithms for image databases, market forces, policy curricula,
norms of fairness and courtesy, historians’ writing, educational standards, Microsoft Excel sales tables, and hotel conference room tables.

7 Concluding words
To come to a close, I will draw three conclusions. First, on a substantive level, the findings presented here tell us something about contemporary discourse, about the stickiness of, and disruptions in, discursive configurations. More precisely, they tell us about the kinds of knowledge that is considered legitimate for diffusion through schools, and the kinds of student-subjects that are being addressed in this particular context of educational publishing. Second, on a conceptual level, they inform our understanding of educational publishing practices in general, in ways that, hopefully, go beyond previous accounts of the field. Third, on a phronetic level, the findings provide insights for those actively aiming to transform textbooks.

Overall, the Papers identify several substantive issues. Fissures in the traditional, classical canons of teaching were identified regarding the roots of democracy in Germany in the Weimar Republic, the presentation of women in history, and the absence of key global events in twentieth century history: Worker and soldier councils were dissociated from their traditional link to anti-democratic tendencies. Gender history was suggested as a way of overcoming the relegation of women to specific women’s chapters. An additional textbook chapter was written to incorporate decolonization and events in Vietnam, Korea, Israel, etc. New canonizations through fissuring traditional ways of teaching about the Holocaust were described: This newly predominant approach to Holocaust education addresses a universal-ethical and contingency-tolerant subject. Students are deemed able to deal with contingent and uncertain knowledge. And fissures in newly hegemonic ways of talking about the Holocaust, the entrepreneurial self and digitalized learning were pointed out: The universal-ethical subject can cautiously be seen as coded along dominant White, heterosexual, same-aged, nuclear family lines. The entrepreneurial self is fissured by simultaneously addressing a potentially radically socially critical subject. The learning benefits of digital textbooks are fissured by inviting students to delegate their thinking to the technological tool.

The ethnographic discourse analyses presented in the Papers describe – some in fine-grained detail, others in less detail – the entangled material-discursive strands which
were, as I see it, particularly relevant to understanding how these substantive issues were handled during the production process. On a conceptual level, this text has suggested eight bundles of practices involved in textbook publishing selection processes: market orientation, knowledge delegation, procedural authorization, pedagogical goals, scholarly accuracy, ethical appropriateness, imagined users and diverse materialdiscursive echoes. It has also proposed a dynamic model inspired by the anthropological orientation to following the thing, where research begins with a particular materialdiscursive thing (here: a textbook) and follows it through (some of) the concatenations of texts, people and other materialdiscursive things with which it is mutually entangled. The signal divergence from previous accounts of textbook production is that this model embraces, rather than apologises for, messy entanglements.

On the level of phronetic research, this contingent, tangled model contests the kind of ‘nodal talk’ that seeks to identify the key decision-making nodes which select or define textbook knowledge. The model suggests that materialdiscursive change follows when multiple lines congeal in a certain direction. Nodal talk asks a misleading question. The question is not which node makes the decisions, but which (multiple) access points to the entangled materialdiscursive strands can be identified for a particular case, in order to push a particular change forward.

The logical next step, following on from the research presented here, is to follow these educational media products into the classroom. This project is currently underway, with a research group employing a mixed method approach to explore the practices of engaging with one of the published textbooks, including two classroom-based ethnographies, a quantitative survey among teachers, 30 interviews with teachers, and further interviews with policy curriculum designers, educational standards authors and educational administrators. A further future challenge is to explore in detail how educational media makers are engaging with digital textbooks, both in their proprietary forms and in the field of open educational resources, and what this means for the future of schooling.

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